

Florida Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

IMPORTANT MESSAGE

Florida Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program

Emergency Vaccine Storage and Handling Advisory

With the approach of a hurricane, an interruption in the power supply is always an issue of concern. To protect the vaccine inventory and minimize potential monetary loss, every facility that stores VFC Program vaccine should have a written Emergency Vaccine Storage and Handling Plan. Power outages have significant implications for vaccine storage. Emergency procedures are vital to protect vaccine in storage.

The VFC Program provides the information below as a guideline for developing an emergency vaccine storage and handling plan for use during emergency situations. Formalize these procedures as a written document. The VFC Program provides templates for an *Emergency Response Plan* and *Emergency Response Worksheet* in Section A-5 of the VFC Program Provider Manual. ALL staff (current and new) should read the plan and know the procedures to follow, and should notify designated personnel about any problems with the vaccine storage equipment. Review and update these procedures regularly. Keep these procedures in a central place where staff can find easily in case of an emergency.

Be prepared to implement emergency procedures *IN ADVANCE*, when the state, local officials, or providers have reasonable cause to believe weather conditions have the potential to disrupt power and/or flood at any office where vaccines are stored.

In advance of the emergency:

- A. Designate primary and back-up vaccine coordinators with emergency contact information.
- B. Identify an alternative storage facility (hospital, packing plant, county health department, etc.) with back-up power (i.e., a generator) where you can properly store and monitor the vaccine for the duration of the storm. Make advance arrangements with the facility.
- C. Ensure the availability of staff to pack and move the vaccine.
- D. Ensure the availability of appropriate packing containers and cold packs. **Dry ice is not recommended for transporting vaccine. It will cause the vaccine to freeze and it will not be usable.**

- E. Ensure transport of the vaccine to the secured storage facility.

It is appropriate for providers to suspend vaccinations before weather conditions deteriorate. Allow sufficient time for packing and transporting vaccine **before** the storm can adversely affect local conditions.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

- A. List emergency phone numbers, companies, and points of contact for:
1. Emergency generator repair company;
 2. National weather service;
 3. Electrical power company;
 4. Refrigeration repair company;
 5. Temperature alarm-monitoring company;
 6. Perimeter alarm repair company;
 7. Perimeter alarm-monitoring company;
 8. Transportation to back-up facility; and
 9. Vaccine manufacturers:
 - a. Merck: (800) 672-6372
 - b. Sanofi-Pasteur: (800) 822-2463
 - c. GlaxoSmithKline: (888) 825-5249
 - d. Pfizer: (800) 438-1985
 - e. Novartis: (800) 244-7668
 - f. MedImmune: (877) 633-4411
- B. Provider/clinic assistance to providers in possession of vaccine:
1. Identify hospitals, health departments, or other facilities that could serve as emergency vaccine storage facilities and communicate this information at the regional or county level and/or with the assistance of Bioterrorism or Emergency Preparedness Units.
 2. Prioritize assistance and communication to target providers in areas at high-risk, such as low-lying coastal or flood plain areas.
- C. Entering vaccine storage areas:
Describe how to enter the building and vaccine storage areas if there is an emergency and the location is closed. Include a floor diagram and locations of:
1. Doors;
 2. Flashlights;
 3. Spare batteries;
 4. Light switches;
 5. Keys;
 6. Locks;
 7. Alarms;
 8. Circuit breakers; and
 9. Packing materials.

- D. Identify whom to call for the following items:
 - 1. Equipment problems;
 - 2. Back-up storage;
 - 3. Back-up transportation; and
 - 4. Security.
- E. Identify which vaccines to pack first in an emergency. While the power is still working:
 - 1. Pack the refrigerated vaccines first with an adequate supply of cold packs.
 - 2. Immediately before transport, remove and pack the varicella-containing vaccines with an adequate supply of cold packs.
- F. Pack and transport all vaccine, or if that is not possible, determine the types and amounts of vaccine to save:
 - 1. For example, save only the most expensive vaccines to minimize monetary loss.
- G. Follow vaccine-packing procedures for transport to back-up storage facilities:
 - 1. Open refrigerated units only when necessary, and only after you have made all preparations for packing and moving the vaccine to alternative storage sites.
 - 2. Use properly insulated containers.
- H. Move vaccine to back-up storage facilities according to pre-arranged plans. These plans should include:
 - 1. How to load transportation vehicle.
 - 2. Routes to take.
 - 3. Time en route.

NOTE: The two National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration sites listed below provide up-to-date information on hurricanes:

- <http://www.srh.weather.gov>
- <http://www.nhc.noaa.gov>